

Student Forum – Fall 2014

October 8, 2014 | 1:30 – 2:30 pm | ECC B-269

Administrators on panel:

Dr. Jose Adames, President

Sondra Flemming, Vice President of Academic Affairs

Dr. Chemene Crawford, Vice President of Student Services and Enrollment Management

Pyeper Wilkins, Assoc. Vice President of Planning, Research & Institutional Effectiveness

David Browning, Vice President of Business Services

Recorder: Kerri Smith

Dr. Adames welcomed the staff and students in attendance and said this administration at El Centro College is very open and wants to hear from students. He said the leadership believes in the mission of “changing lives through higher education.” They want to hear the student’s concerns, be pro-active and address those before they become problems.

Student: He’s had the pleasure of being both a student and staff member. He wanted to thank the staff, especially Shanee Moore in the Office of Student Life, for treating him like family and encouraging him to stay in school.

Dr. Adames: He thanked the student for passing along that message because sometimes the administrators only hear the complaints and not the compliments.

Student: He lost his financial aid this summer because he didn’t know how the “W” would affect his completion rate. He feels that the advisors need to explain this better to students so they can decide if they want to drop classes or not. He also feels that 15 minutes is not long enough to speak with a financial aid representative and the allotted time should be longer.

Dr. Crawford: She explained that employees in the student services areas are being cross-trained so they will understand the different department’s procedures and processes.

Pam Lucas, Director of Financial Aid (was in attendance): She wasn’t sure if the advisors he was talking about were financial aid advisors or regular academic advisors, but she invites the student to come down and talk to her or other financial aid employees and they will explain the completion rate.

Student: He was having problems getting on a computer that has the Cengage software and found that only the accounting lab computers have this installed. This is a problem for some students because the accounting lab is not open all of the time. Could more computers have that on them?

Sondra Flemming: She will talk to the accounting lab and see what is going on with this and why more computers aren't equipped with this and try to get it on other computers.

Student: Two students wanted to know why there aren't dance classes offered as electives here at ECC like other campuses. They enjoy going to the two free Zumba classes that are offered by Office of Student Life, but they would like more classes where student have an outlet for dancing.

Sondra Flemming: She explained that ECC used to have a dance club and a dance studio years ago that closed due to lack of interest. She said she can talk to the credit side and see if there's any way to bring this back.

Student: She wanted to voice a complaint about the campus, especially the stairwells, not being clean and sanitary. She takes the stairs and there's so much trash everywhere and even used sexual protection laying around. She said the women's restrooms are not very clean, some are missing toilet seats and trash cans. She said the restrooms on lower floors are usually cleaner than those on the upper floors, but students don't have time to run up and down.

David Browning: He will talk to Facilities and ask them to communicate this problem to the custodians so they can do better on keeping areas clean.

Dr. Adames: He said this would be an excellent initiative for students and clubs to help out and show a sense of pride in the college. Maybe we could get student volunteers to help.

Another student: She gave a suggestion that trashcans be placed in stairwells.

Another student: He explained that the men's restroom by Subway is usually out of toilet paper and the trash is overflowing.

David Browning: He said the toilet paper issue is because people come in and steal it, but he'll have facilities try to check on this more often.

Student: She said that security needed to be better around campus and ID badges needed to be worn and checked by security guards as people enter the doors. She felt is in not enforced as good as it used to be when the security guards were first put into place.

David Browning: He explained that he talked to the security guard company and they are going to send out some new guards and he will make sure they check ID badges. He also said that we are a community building and we need to allow perspective students to come inside and check things out and get information. He talked to a student a few days ago that didn't know this was a college and anyone could go to school here, so he wants these people to be allowed inside to explore options. He understands the safety concerns though and will try to have officers and security work on a balance. He also asked that if anyone sees someone that doesn't seem to belong or is doing something strange, they should notify the police officers immediately. No one should try to confront this person themselves.

Student: Can we increase security outside the building and maybe hire more police officers?

David Browning: He said the officers do patrol outside, but they have to balance their time inside and outside. If the college hires more police officers, this will cost money for wages and will take money away from other areas for programs, such as Student Life.

Student: She asked why the benches were placed on the Lamar side of the building because people just sit and smoke there instead of smoking in the designated smoking area.

David Browning: He said one of the reasons was because Student Government asked that there be more casual meeting places for students where they don't have to be quiet. He said it also makes the building and college look like it has life on that side. People have the freedom to smoke close to the streets because that side of the sidewalk is public property. The only law is just not smoking within 30 feet from an entrance.

Dr. Adames: He said the institution should campaign and encourage students and staff to not smoke or quit smoking because it's better for their health. Sometimes it's about getting the message out there about how bad smoking is for people.

Student: She asked if the benches could be removed and give students another place to hang out, maybe a place with pool tables or something fun. She thinks the people sitting on the benches gives the wrong message about the type of people that attend school here.

Dr. Adames: He said that is something the administration could look into and it sounds like a great idea, but ECC is limited due to the space constraints of the building. Other campuses have more room to spread out or build more buildings and that's not the case for ECC. The area we have is all we have. He would explore that possibility, but isn't sure if it's feasible.

David Browning: He explained that the number of students that attend ECC has almost doubled in the last six or seven years, so there's now a greater need for more classrooms. This takes away any space for common areas or lounges. He asked that students give the benches a little bit longer to work out and he cautioned about making the wrong assumptions about the people sitting on the benches because then it looks like the college is discriminating against certain kinds of people.

Student: He asked what time the campus officially closes at night. He explained that police officers ask students to leave way before 9pm, which he thought was the time to close the building.

David Browning: He verified that 9pm is the official close time. He also said that some floors do not have any classes going on or any staff in their offices later at night, so the officers should make people leave those floors. He said he will talk to the police officers to see if the students on the first few floors could be allowed to stay until 9pm.

Student: He said the steps on the Main and Lamar side of the building are big steps and are hard for handicapped students to get up and they have to go to another entrance.

David Browning: He said they've asked the city to make that more handicapped accessible, but the city explained that the tunnels under the street are too close to the street level to do that, so the college can't really solve this problem.

Student: He said he was a homeless teen and a student in transition at one time and needed assistance. He asked if the college could form a group or organization that could help other homeless students or those in transition.

Dr. Crawford: She said the Adult Resource Center (ARC) is here to help students. They are located in the basement and anyone is free to go speak with them.

Shanee Moore, Associate Dean of Student Programs: She said that different student organizations have collaborated and made an agreement with the church across the street to allow people to donate food and clothes. They are working on a process of how to refer students in need to this church. She also stated that the Adult Resource Center is a great place for students who need help with being homeless or substance abuse.

Student: He asked if all teachers are asked to be on E-Campus.

Sondra Flemming: She said that all teachers are asked to be on E-Campus.

Student: He said he'd lost his DART pass and it had not be turned into the police station. He doesn't have the money to buy another one and why couldn't the college replace his lost DART pass? He asked if there was any way to get an app for your phone.

David Browning: He explained that DART gives ECC deep discounts for passes for students. We pay a little less than \$1 million instead of the normal price of \$6 million. We also have a contract with DART and one of the stipulations in there is that lost or stolen passes cannot be replaced. If we did that, it would negate the contract and the discounts from DART. He said they talked about getting phone apps or passes for phones and have tested it in the past, but it just didn't work. He suggested that this student go to DART and ask for a discounted ECC pass, which would at least save him some over the regular cost.